

Imaging
DECLASSIFICATION

TO	ACTION	SIGNATURE (Surname), GRADE AND DATE	TO	ACTION	SIGNATURE (Surname), GRADE AND DATE
ST			USS	Coord	
PEB			7	DNA	Sign
CA		<i>Geiger 9 Apr 82</i>	8		
Exec			9		
SS	Coord	<i>[Signature]</i>	10		
NAME OF ACTION OFFICER AND GRADE			SUSPENSE DATE		
LtCol Geiger			ASAP		
ECT Point Paper on Imagery Declassification			DATE APRIL 9, 1982		

Enclosed for signature is the requested point paper reflecting Mr Aldridge's rewrite and Mr Hill's comments.

In a related development, Gen Rogers sent an eyes only SPECAT message to SECSTATE Haig and SECDEF Weinburger, info to DCI and DIR DIA, proposing again that satellite imagery be declassified and released to bolster European public support for NATO posture. State has prepared a negative response, coordinated it with Adm Inman, is holding it for Sec Haig's signature, and after Sec Haig's signature will send it over for SECDEF COORDINATION. DUSD(P) staff is recommending SECDEF coordination upon receipt and no separate SECDEF response. State response will indicate SECDEF and DCI agreement. Mr Haig is out of town and completion schedule is unknown.

Recommend prompt delivery of the DNRO memo to precede the Gen Rogers action if possible. NRO position is consistent with State and DDCI views.

Prepared for Mr Aldridge for (WB)
4/12 Slu

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(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

April 14, 1982

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Satellite Reconnaissance Imagery Declassification

In response to your question on whether it is appropriate to declassify and release satellite imagery, I have summarized the key elements of this very difficult issue below.

Current policy requires classification of all satellite reconnaissance imagery and any declassification would require DCI consent and presidential decision. There are two types of satellite imagery that relate to your request, each of which pose a different approach for declassification:

- Imagery revealing foreign military activity or a crisis event which has created a military or political confrontation requiring a US response.
- Imagery revealing foreign weapon systems development, particularly Soviet weapon systems.

The major concerns with release of imagery of either of these events are: (1) compromising the quality, operation, and vulnerability of the imagery collection system and interpretation techniques and signatures even from limited releases; (2) evoking countermeasures such as concealment or deception; (3) provoking Soviet opposition and erosion of treaty protection from interference; (4) fueling the appetite of the public or news media for more information; and (5) raising an issue on the security classification of other potentially more sensitive images.

With regard to the first type of imagery, dealing with military operations or crises, I believe these disadvantages of release can be offset by the following advantages:

- Since it is usually a single event that is of interest, the release can be judged on a case-by-case basis in which the full range of advantages and disadvantages can be weighed.
- The imagery clearly indicates unambiguous proof of guilt.
- The declassification shows the seriousness of US interest.
- The selective release of one or two images could minimize the degree of compromise on quality or operations; the proof of guilt is not usually image quality dependent.

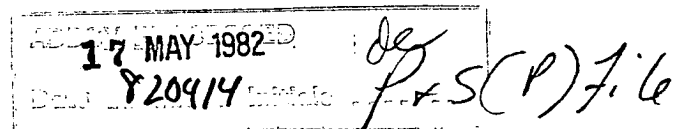
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However, release of the second type of imagery dealing with weapon systems has less advantage and, in my view, could be counterproductive:

- Many images would have to be released to show the magnitude of the overall Soviet effort. There would probably have to be a systematic release of images over a prolonged period to have the desired effect.
- Much of the information on the quality of Soviet weapon systems is obtained through more sensitive SIGINT and HUMINT sources, not imagery.
- Most critics do not question the magnitude of the Soviet threat, only the capability relative to US and allied forces. Such releases would probably require a comparative analysis of capabilities.
- Declassification of selected weapons development images would certainly raise the question of releases of other evidence and increase the demand for additional images on other weapon systems. It would be hard to establish a limit on the amount of declassified material.
- Unless image quality was high, the release could raise a question as to our real ability to know details.
- It could give the Soviets additional incentives to hide weapon system details from public disclosure, or possibly to interfere with our imaging satellites. We would, in essence, be releasing Soviet "state secrets" to the world.

In summary, I believe it may be to our advantage to selectively release satellite imagery on certain crisis or one-time events when the short-term gain clearly outweighs the long-term sources and methods protection loss and other risks. But, I believe it is to our net disadvantage to declassify on a long-term systematic basis the multiplicity of images required to highlight Soviet weapon system developments.

I have enclosed two reports which go into detail on this subject and draw the same conclusion. Please let me know if I can provide any additional information.



E. C. Aldridge, Jr.

2 Attachments

1. Declassification of Photo-reconnaissance Imagery - An Options Paper
2. Declassification of Photo-reconnaissance Imagery and SALT Two Ratification

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